

Veterans invited to attend Operation Veterans: Start Up and Grow conferences

08/26/10 aw/kb statewide

HAYS, Kan. -- Three half-day conferences designed to meet the needs of military veterans who are entrepreneurs will be hosted by the Kansas Small Business Development Center (KSBDC) in October. KSBDC is participating in a multi-state effort to provide opportunities to veterans who are interested in starting a business or who need assistance in growing their business.

The conferences will be on Tuesday, Oct. 5 in Wichita; Tuesday, Oct. 19 in Manhattan, and Thursday, Oct. 28 in Kansas City.

In June, KSBDC launched an online survey and conducted conference calls to learn more about the needs of Kansas veteran business owners and future veteran entrepreneurs. They used the information gathered to design a conference agenda that provides assistance in the areas in which veterans indicated the most interest.

"Overall, our veterans are interested in obtaining more information about the financial piece of opening a business -- such as how to find capital, what programs are available for loans and if there are grants available," said Wally Kearns, KSBDC state director. "In addition, the survey results indicated there is a strong interest in learning tips on how to market a business and how to do business with government entities."

During the process of gathering information through the survey and the conference calls, KSBDC staff had the opportunity to hear veterans share their experiences in the military. One of the conference call participants was Karl Monger, who, following active duty, joined a U.S. Army Reserve unit and ultimately achieved the rank of major, retiring in 2003. He has 18 years of sales and management experience, primarily in heavy construction. He oversaw a \$9 million branch for a leading equipment rental company and ran the crane division for a large construction firm.

He is the owner of DriPowder LLC, a designated Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned small business, and is the founder of GallantFew Inc., an organization dedicated to assisting veterans in transition.

"Today's veterans face the difficult choice of re-enlistment and redeployment or discharge and unemployment," Monger said. "They face unemployment rates double the U.S. average and are a disproportionate percent of our homeless, and 18 of them commit suicide every day. I became interested in KSBDC's activities because I believe there are tremendous opportunities for veterans to become business owners, and the more veterans we can help in this process, the better our communities will be. KSBDC's education program is an ideal start to this process, and military veterans are uniquely

prepared to own their own businesses. There is no better training on leadership, management, logistics, discipline and responsibility than that given by the U.S. military today."

Monger will be a presenter at the conferences in October. He will share his experience and offer tips on how to navigate the process of obtaining the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business designation.

Veterans attending the conference will have a variety of sessions to select from in the following tracks:

- The Basics (exploring a business idea, writing a business plan, marketing a business).
- Capital/Financing (financing options, working with a loan officer).
- Doing Business with the Government (opportunities in local, state and federal government).

Participants may also attend sessions about using their veteran benefits and exploring franchising opportunities. Local veteran business owners will share their experiences as part of the luncheon panel presentation.

There are 18 KSBDC regional or outreach centers throughout the state. Each center is staffed with consultants who provide confidential, one-on-one business consulting at no cost. KSBDC also provides low-cost seminars and workshops in traditional areas of entrepreneurship and in areas of interest based on issues and trends in current events.

The centers at Johnson County Community College, Wichita State University, Washburn University and the University of Kansas have been extensively involved in planning Operation Veterans: Start Up and Grow conferences and are providing consultants for several training sessions. The statewide host for the KSBDC is Fort Hays State University.

For more information or to register for Operation Veterans: Start Up and Grow, visit www.kansas.gov/ksbdc or call KSBDC at 785-296-6514. Kansas residents can call toll-free at 877-625-7232. This is a free conference funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The Kansas Small Business Development Center Network is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Kansas Department of Commerce. KSBDC is nationally accredited through the Association of Small Business Development Centers by Congressional mandate. KSBDC receives funding from and partners with higher education and economic development organizations to provide Kansas entrepreneurs with no-cost business consulting and resources for starting, maintaining and growing their businesses. For more information about the KSBDC Network visit www.kansas.gov/ksbdc or call 877-625-7232.

-- end --